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MEPI in 2009— apply for a grant!

- The Tunis Regional Office has around \$2 million to support grants in the region.
- Details on how to apply can be found on page three or with your local MEPI committee.
- Make this the year to become involved with your community...and MEPI activities!

The Launch of the Network of Democratic Journalists in the Arab World

By Wahid Labidi

Thirty journalists from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria gathered in Amman, Jordan on the 27th and 28th of July 2009 to establish the Network of Democratic Journalists in the Arab World (NDJAW).

In the beginning however there was just the Network of Democrats in the Arab World (NDAW) who coordinated four MEPI funded workshops bringing together journalists in Algiers, Manamah, Cairo, and Amman. These workshops engendered thirty journalists to come together to pour over the findings of the four workshops and rally journalists to organize to empower democratic advocates and defend freedom of expression in the Arab region.

These participants committed to create a network that would improve exchange of information on issues of freedom of expression, protect journalists and expand linkages amongst their peers. Having made this pledge, they formulated a mission, a charter, a structure and



The kick off meeting of the Network of Democratic Journalists in the Arab World

brainstormed on funding to sustain the network. A draft charter was later unanimously approved by all the participants. The newly formed Network elected nine board members who in turn approved Mr. Slah Eddine Al-Jourchi, as the Network Coordinator.

From this ominous outset, the Network garnered extensive media coverage from more than 30 media sources. A few of these articles expressed concerns that the Network's intention and interaction may jeopardize the role of the existing Arab Journalists Union. Aly R. Abuzaakouk Executive Director,

Libya Forum for Human and Political Development, rebutted these concerns saying, "The Network has come into being to serve Arab journalism and support other existing institutions that defend freedom of expression, protect journalists and promote the principles of democracy and human rights in the Arab world."

"It is crucial that the board of Network of Democratic Journalists in the Arab World reaches out to Arab journalists to appease fears and reassure them about its ultimate mission" said one of the Network's founders and the media coordinator of the Network, Mr. Jamal Ben Dahman.

MEPI: Pursuing Democracy Promotion in the Arab World

By Peter Mulrean (Serialized from the Foreign Service Magazine)

In 2002, a US State Department review of policy toward the Arab world concluded that the United States needed to do more to promote democratic reform in the Middle East and North Africa. This meant the U.S. would no longer deal exclusively with governments, but would also reach out to the people of the region, listening to them, and responding to their calls to build a better future for their countries. The results of the State Department review tracked closely with the conclusions of the 2002 UNDP Arab Human Development Report, a frank study by Arab scholars that identified three “deficits” across the Arab world.

According to the UNDP report, the *freedom deficit*, the *women’s empowerment deficit*, and the *knowledge deficit* not only prevent the Arab world from fulfilling its potential, but put it in danger of falling ever further behind in the globalized economy. The US policy review recommended pursuing democracy promotion in the Arab world on two tracks. The first track was diplomatic: urging governments to recognize that reform was in the long-term interest of both the people and the regimes. The second track was programmatic: using US assistance funds in direct support of reform efforts.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), launched in December 2002, was the embodiment of this new policy. It was based on the assumptions that democratic development would only be sustainable if home grown, and that top-down, government-led reform was unlikely to lead to significant change unless accompanied by bottom-up demand from the people. Therefore, MEPI was designed as a flexible and rapid tool to provide concrete support directly to reformers in the region instead of to, or through, governments. MEPI’s four-program areas structure – democracy, economic growth, education, women’s empowerment – was aimed at addressing the “deficits” outlined in the UNDP report.

The first challenge for MEPI at the end of 2002 was to find the right staff and move them to the region to make the human contact, understand the needs and respond with effective assistance on the ground. The MEPI Regional Offices in Tunis and Abu Dhabi were created to address this challenge. In our next newsletter, we will discuss how the Regional Offices and MEPI programs evolved based on their first experiences in the region.



Embassy of the United States of America

Tunis, Tunisia

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Tunis, Tuesday, August 18, 2009

MEPI Regional Office in Tunis celebrates its fifth anniversary

The Middle East Partnership Initiative Regional Office (MEPI RO) in Tunis, serving the Mediterranean region, is celebrating its fifth anniversary on August 18, 2009. MEPI RO in Tunis marks five years of its work to promote reform in the region in partnership with community organizations and civil society in eight countries and the Palestinian Territories.

Since its conception, the MEPI RO in Tunis has witnessed a significant increase in its operations. For the fiscal year 2009, MEPI RO Tunis expects to fund up to 51 projects in the region with an estimated budget of \$2.42 million dollars.

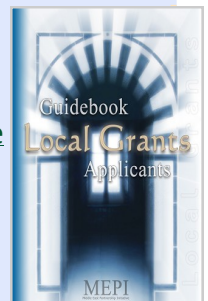
For any questions, regarding MEPI objectives, projects or its anniversary, please contact the MEPI Regional Office in Tunis at 71 107 058 or via e-mail at: mepi-medregion@state.gov



Submit your grant applications

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country’s U.S. Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov) for step-by-step instructions in English and Arabic.

www.medregion.mepi.state.gov



Alliances to Support Schools and Students

Association Du Nord Pour le Développement Educatif et Economique (ANDEE) implemented a MEPI-funded project entitled "Alliances to Support Schools and Students" (ASSAS). The project aims to promote community participation in three high schools in Morocco by training students, parents and local business leaders to create mutually beneficial partnerships to support their students and programs in education.

In partnership with MEPI and a delegation from the Moroccan Ministry of National Education, ASSAS organized a conference entitled "Education Reforms: Public Participation in Education and the Importance of Creating Partnerships to Support School Programs". In preparation for the conference, ASSAS developed

and distributed brochures, flyers, and banners to reach a large audience. The project was introduced to the main players and stakeholders in the community including the Provincial Delegation of Education, City Council members, school principals, local civil society groups, students clubs, parents, local businesses, and private sector representatives.

Almost one hundred from these responded and attended the conference.

During the conference, eight panelists, three of whom were high school principals, delivered presentations on the topic of public participation in education and the importance of building public-private partnerships to support school programs.

Besides the conference, ASSAS made several visits to



ASSAS's members during the conference

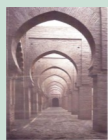
the offices of the Provincial Delegation of Education, participating schools, local businesses and private sector companies to distribute the project's brochures and flyers and to communicate ASSAS's message. ASSAS also discussed its activities and collected feedback, enabling it to recruit more partners from

the community.

ASSAS also conducted several small meetings with partners including groups of students.

This conference did not only succeed in raising awareness of the importance of community participation, but it also made ASSAS known.

(Continued on page 4)



FfF 2004



FfF 2006

FORUM FOR THE FUTURE MARRAKECH, November 2009



FfF 2007



FfF 2008

- The Forum for the Future (FfF) is a cooperative effort by the states of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) region, the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized nations, and other partners. These partners seek to promote and develop political, economic, and social reform in the region.
- Forum members are united around a common agenda that advances the universal values of human dignity, democracy, economic opportunity, and social justice.
- Host governments of FfF (2009): Morocco and Italy.
- Civil Society coordinators: "Organisation Marocaine des droits Humains" and "No Peace Without Justice".

The FfF will be fed by three thematic workshops:

- The Impact of the International Financial Crisis on the BMENA Region " workshop
Beirut/Lebanon September 26-27, 2009.
- "Political Reforms and Local Governance" workshop
Rabat/Morocco October 5-6, 2009
- "Human Development and Human Security" workshop
Qatar October 10-14, 2009.

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Participants also expressed an interest to know more about MEPI.

Right after the conference, ASSAS launched a capacity building workshop. On May 23 and 24, ASSAS trained more than 50 people representing school management committee members, parents, students representing the clubs in their schools, civil society group members, local businessmen and private sector representatives on how to build effective partnerships that support schools and students.

During the training, participants acquired techniques to identify school problems and ways to address them. Training also included how to collaboratively develop a school plan and how to mobilize local resources to support it. Four working groups were created during the two day-workshop to discuss school issues. They agreed on recommendations

and a set of future action items. These plans will be implemented by all partners assigned specific roles and will be incorporated in each of the participating schools' "projet d'établissement." (Each school in Morocco is mandated to have a "projet d'établissement" that highlights the major activities and the various programs the school is implementing).

At the end of the workshop, ASSAS distributed a Participation Certificate to all participants.

ASSAS has created real momentum for all partners, to collaboratively develop school plans and mobilize local resources to support it. Partners from local associations discussed leading some initiatives with participating schools. ASSAS success can be measured by businesses and private sector representatives seeking ways on how best they can support the students' programs.

September 15: International Day of Democracy

Democracy, which derives from the Greek word "demos," or "people," is defined, basically, as government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. In some forms, democracy can be exercised directly by the people; in large societies, it is by the people through their elected agents. Or, in the memorable phrase of President Abraham Lincoln, democracy is government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. Democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. In the end, people living in a democratic society must serve as the ultimate guardians of their own freedom and must forge their own path toward the ideals set forth in the preamble to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world."

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MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, and accounts for around \$2 million in program funding each year. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants), as well as supporting visits, seminars, and training programs designed to advance reform.

We are on the web!
www.medregion.mepi.state.gov